Kilina Penga

Short stories
from the
Paniya community

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Modernity has taken its toll on all ancient communities. Not just their culture but their very survival is at stake. Traditional knowledge and its transmission have taken a beating. Gone are the days when stories were narrated, songs sung and experiences shared by the old with their young. Today, more than ever before 'the book' is the sole source of knowledge, more so for the school-going child. This book of stories is, therefore, an attempt to put traditional knowledge in the hands of every child through the written word.

The Culture and Documentation team of ACCORD/AMS has documented songs, stories, riddles and rituals of the Adivasis of Gudalur, Nilgiris. A few of the songs and stories suitable for the 8 -12 year-olds have been selected for this book. The stories have been re-worked with age-appropriate language by the teachers of Vidyodaya School, Gudalur. Three of the illustrations have been done by Ms.Anne Best who has worked with aboriginal communities in Australia. The students of Vidyodaya school have done the rest of the illustrations.

This is the English version of the stories that have already been published in the Paniya and Tamil language. The Paniya communities live in and around the forests of the Gudalur block in the Nilgiris. The Paniya language has a modified Tamil script today which was used in the earlier Paniya-Tamil publication.

We hope that children all around the world find these stories enjoyable. Through this endeavour we wish that the rich traditional knowledge of this small community is shared and passed on for generations to come.

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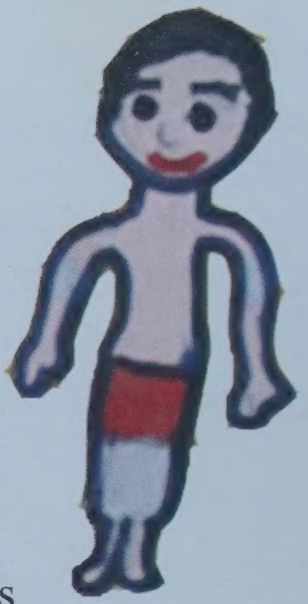
How the Paniya tribe came to be - The Ippi Malai story

Long ago in the forests of Wayanad lived a man called Nair* and a priest called Iyer*. They lived together in a fort near a temple. Iyer looked after the temple and Nair did all the work in the fort. Iyer and Nair were good friends.

*Nair - pronounced Na-yer

*Iyer - pronounced Ai-yer

In the same forest there also lived a Paniya boy and girl. These children had never seen other human beings. They lived freely, collecting fruits and berries from the forest. They played with the animals in the forest. Sometimes when they were in danger they would hide in the caves or climb up onto the trees.



Once, the two children went searching for food near the fort.

Nair and Iyer saw the children picking berries near their home. They decided to catch the children and keep them as slaves.

While the children were eating the berries, Nair and Iyer crept up behind a huge rock. They jumped to catch the children, but the children were very quick for them.

Terrified, they ran, yelling "Ippi!"

One day there was a festival in the temple. There was a feast for the people who came to attend it. Payasam,* and tasty vegetable dishes were served in plenty on banana leaves. They ate to their hearts' content.

* Payasam,- a sweet dish

However, there was plenty of food left over.
A little later the children came that way and saw the left over food.

"Oh look, food!" they cried happily.
"I'm so hungry," cried the little girl. "I think I'm going to have some food. Will you have some too?" she asked.

"Mmmm... Yes!" said the boy, who was just as hungry.
So they sat down together by the same rock where they had eaten before.

Nair and Iyer had seen the children. This time they were determined to capture the children. Remembering how fast the children were, they found a big net and crept softly towards the two children. The children were so happy eating that they didn't hear the two men coming.

Then Nair threw the net over them They shouted and tried to run away but the net held them fast. They could not escape.

Nair and Iyer took one child each. Nair took the girl to his house and Iyer took the boy. They made the two children work as slaves in their houses. The children worked very hard and were never allowed to see each other. Once a year they were given one measure of paddy and three muzhams* of cloth.

Time went by and the children were now adults. Iyer and Nair realized that, if they found partners for the boy and girl, they could have many more slaves. They decided that the boy and girl should marry each other.

Although the boy and girl moved into their own house they continued to work for Nair and Iyer.

As time went by the Paniya couple had ten children. As their children grew up they moved away from home to other places.

*3 Muzhams - approx 1 metre

They had children of their own and so they grew in number. Each of the ten children became leaders in their own villages. Thus the Paniya community came to be. The mountain where the little boy and girl had seen Nair and Iyer for the first time is called "IPPI MALAI"* even today.

*Ippi Malai - Ippi mountain

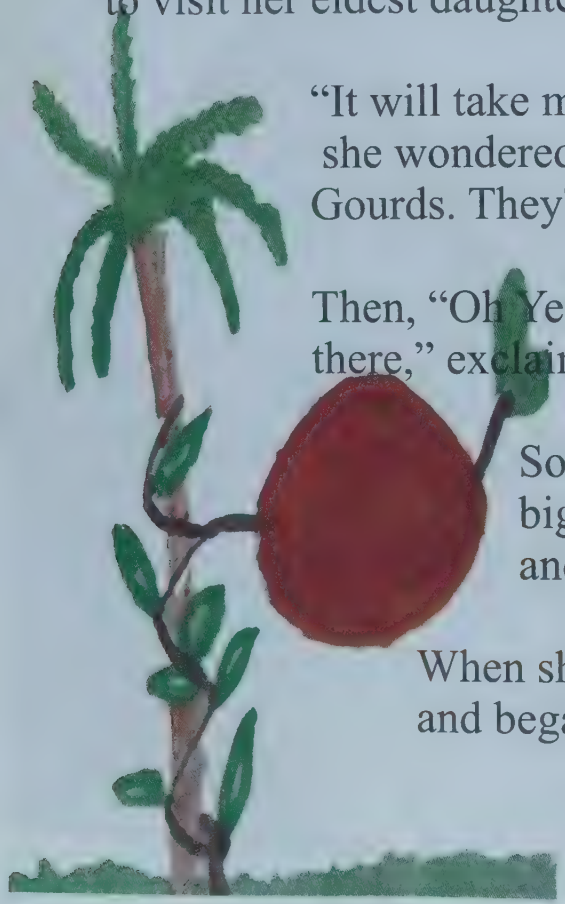
Amma visits her daughter

Long, long ago there lived a family of three sisters and their Amma* . They lived on the edge of a thick jungle. They were a happy family. Big Sister, Middle Sister and Little Sister played together, sang together and danced together. They also loved to help Amma on the Vegetable Farm.

*Amma - Mother.

After many years the three sisters were married. They moved to villages far away, and started their own families. Amma now lived all by herself. She missed her children. She thought about their songs, their dances and all the fun they'd had together.

"How I long to see at least one of them," wished Amma. One sunny morning she decided to visit her eldest daughter. She had to go through the jungle to reach her house.



"It will take me weeks to get there. How can I cross this big forest?" she wondered. Then she remembered that it was the season for Pumpkins and Gourds. They'd had plenty of Bottle Gourds that year. She thought for a while.

Then, "Oh Yes! The Bottle Gourd! That's the quickest and the safest way to get there," exclaimed Amma.

Soon she was out in her garden choosing the biggest gourd she could find. She cleaned it and carved out a nice place for herself inside it.

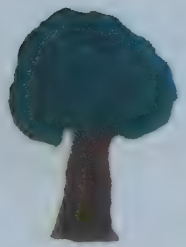
When she was ready she climbed into the Gourd and began rolling downhill right through the forest.

"Roll on, roll on, roll on, roll on,
Faster and faster,
To see Big Sister,"
she sang.

The Gourd rolled down one hill and then the next.
Then it rolled past Fox's lair.

" What is this?" cried Fox stopping the Gourd. Amma climbed out to see who had stopped her.
"Where are you going?" asked Fox.
"I'm visiting Big Sister," she replied.
"Good. Do say 'hello' to her for me" said Fox as he waved Amma goodbye.

A little further down was Lion's den. Lion too stopped the Gourd and tried to break it open. Amma got out of the Gourd to see who was trying to break it. She was shocked to see not just one lion but a whole family of lions. They stood around her silent and watchful.

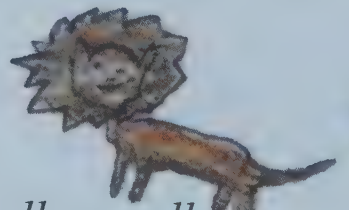


Now Amma began to worry. "I must show them that I'm not afraid" thought Amma.
"I can do some wonderful magic" she announced bravely.
Is anyone interested?" she asked.

She noticed that the lions were now looking at her with interest.
They wanted to see her magic.
"Get me some good fine ash," she ordered, "and I'll show you what I can do."
One of the lions brought her some very fine ash. Amma closed her eyes and held out her hand with the ash inside it.

"Breem! Broom! Broom! Brufff!" said Amma in a shrill voice.

She uttered these Magic Words thrice. Then she blew hard on the ash.
It flew all around, blinding the lions standing around her.
Now was her chance to escape.
Before they could even open their eyes, Amma jumped into her Gourd and off she went.



"Roll on, roll on, roll on, roll on,
Faster and faster
To see Big Sister!"
sang Amma thankfully when she was well over the next hill.

Once upon a time Fox and Pig were in need of work. So they went to Pappan's* house . They asked him if he had any jobs for them. Pappan asked them to uproot some grass for him.

Pig was hardworking and honest. Fox was lazy and cunning. Pig started work immediately but Fox didn't work at all. He slept the whole time. The only time Fox worked was when Pappan came to check on them.

*Pappan - landlord

One day Pig was ill, so he lay down to rest for a while. When Pappan came to check, Pig was sleeping. Watchful Fox had seen Pappan coming, so he quickly picked up his spade. Pappan got very angry with Pig. Without asking Pig why he had been sleeping, he hit him hard and killed him.

Fox saw Pappan having pork for dinner that evening. He thought "I must have that meat. Maybe I'll steal it from Pappan," So he stole the meat from Pappan that night. The next morning Pappan was furious. The pork was nowhere to be found! "That cunning Fox tricked me last night. He stole the meat from me. I must teach him a lesson," he thought.

Early next morning, Pappan fixed a scarecrow on the way to Fox's field. He smeared the scarecrow with jackfruit gum* and waited for Fox.
Fox strolled in to work the next day. He was very happy. He'd had such a good meal of pork the night before. Suddenly, he saw this new animal right in front of him. He did not like it.

"Who are you? Why do you stare at me?" he asked angrily. No one answered. "Get out of my way, or I'll kick you!" he screamed. There was still no answer.
So he gave it one hard kick. "Oh! Oh! What do you think you're doing? Leave my foot

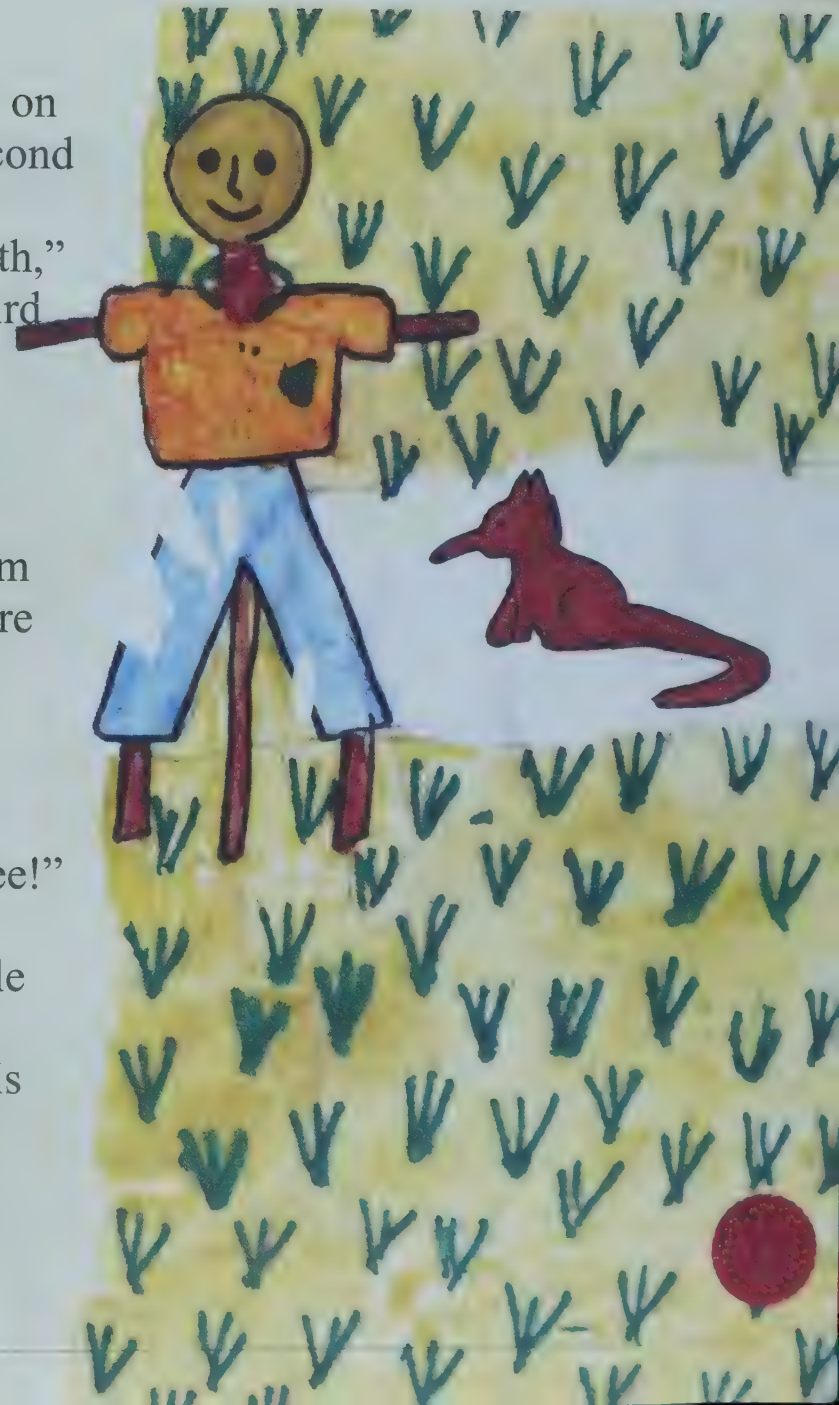
*Jackfruit - children eating this fruit, picture given on page 51

*jackfruit gum - a milky white gum of the jackfruit

alone!" he howled. His foot was now stuck to the gum on the scarecrow. So he kicked the scarecrow with his second foot, but that too got stuck.
"Don't you worry, I have two more feet to kick you with," he declared to the scarecrow. He hit it hard with his third foot. That got stuck too.

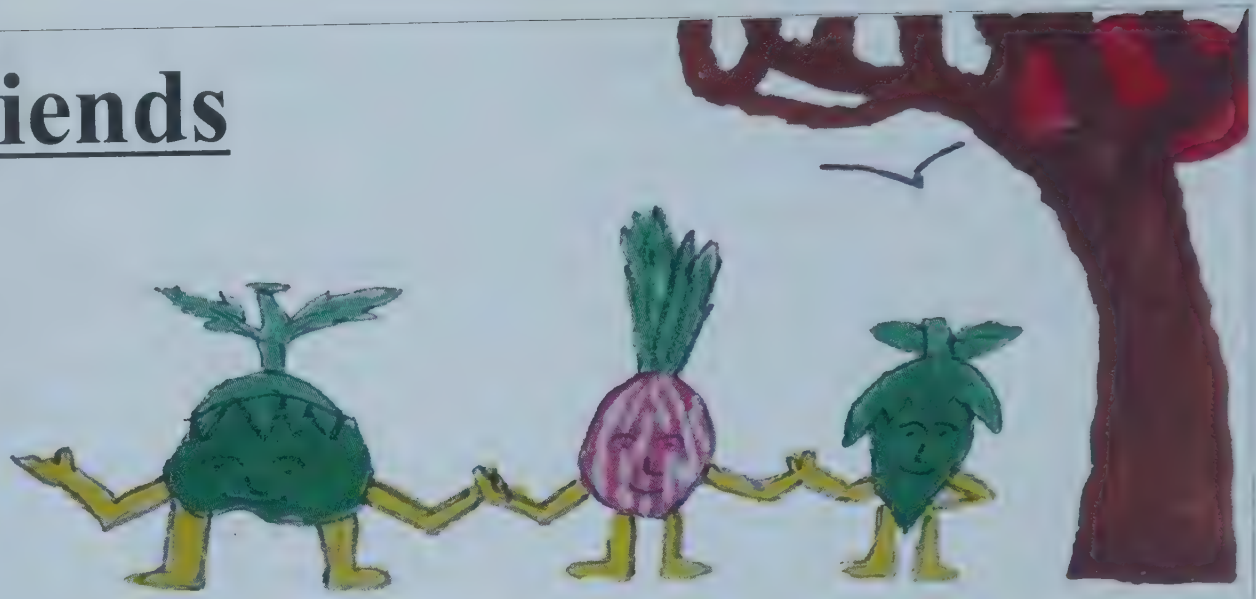
Finally he hit out with his fourth foot, to pull away from the scarecrow, Alas! That did not help! All his feet were really stuck! The jackfruit gum held him firmly!

"Oh please, please save me! Someone please let me free!" Fox yelled in fear.
No one heard him. Poor Fox! He stayed stuck the whole day and night. He howled for help.
Pappan heard him and thought, "I hope he has learnt his lesson. Tomorrow I will free him."



The three friends

Once upon a time there lived three friends -
'Tomato', 'Onion' and 'Chilli'.

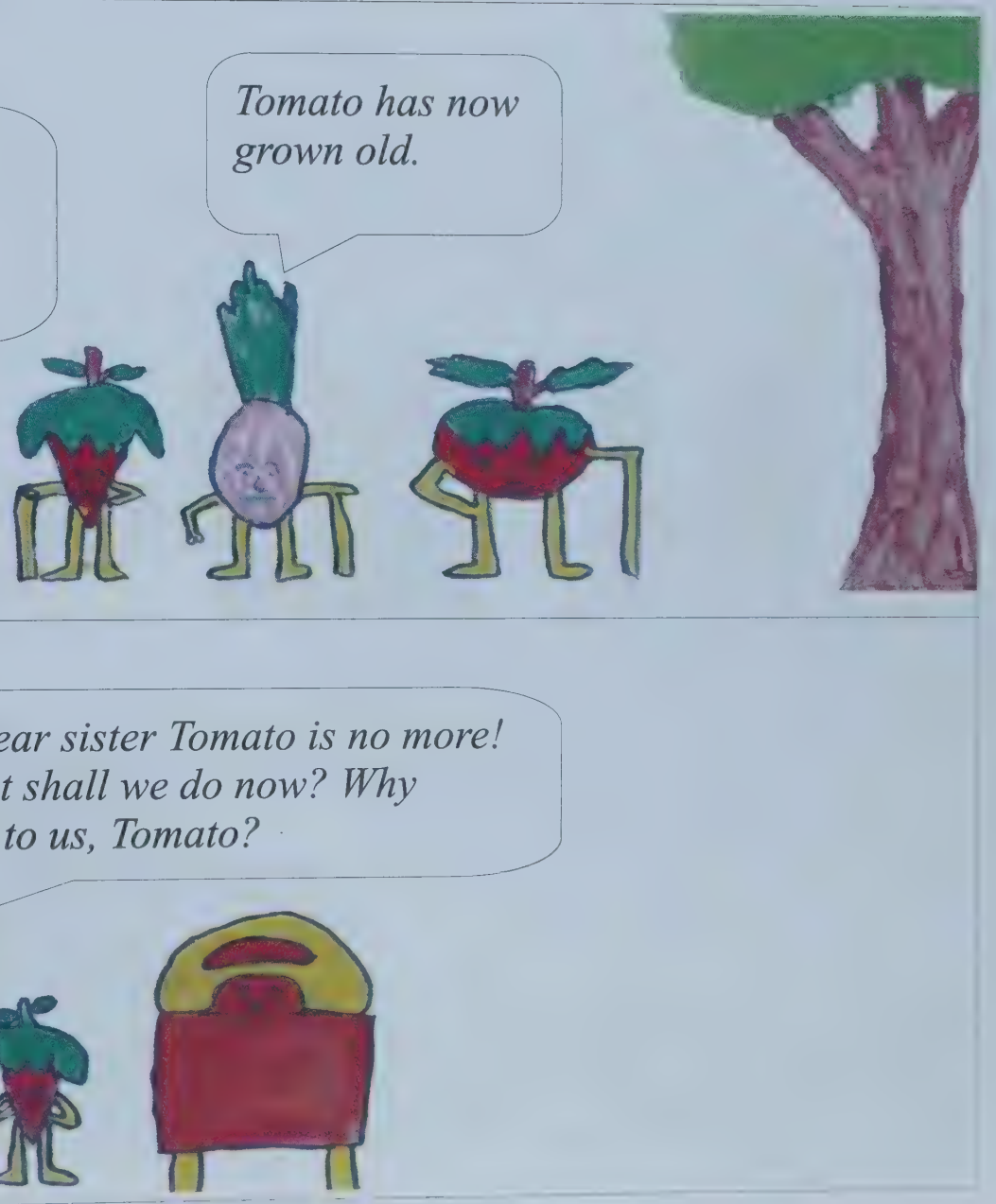


Look at us, we are both green. Did you notice how long Onion's leaves are?"

Hey Chilli! Look again! Both Onion and I are round and fat but you are long and thin.

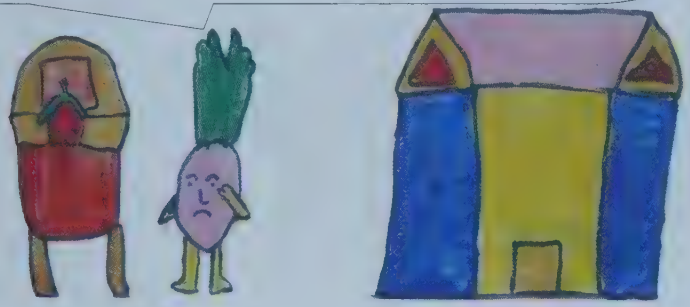
Yes you are right Tomato, I agree with you, both of us are round.

A few days later …….


Tomato has now grown old.
Oh! Oh! Now I have turned red just like you, my dear sister Tomato!
O dear! My dear sister Tomato is no more! Oh God! What shall we do now? Why don't you talk to us, Tomato?

A few more days pass by...

My sister Tomato and my brother Chilli are both no more. Now I have no one left to call my own! Will there be anyone to weep for me after I die?

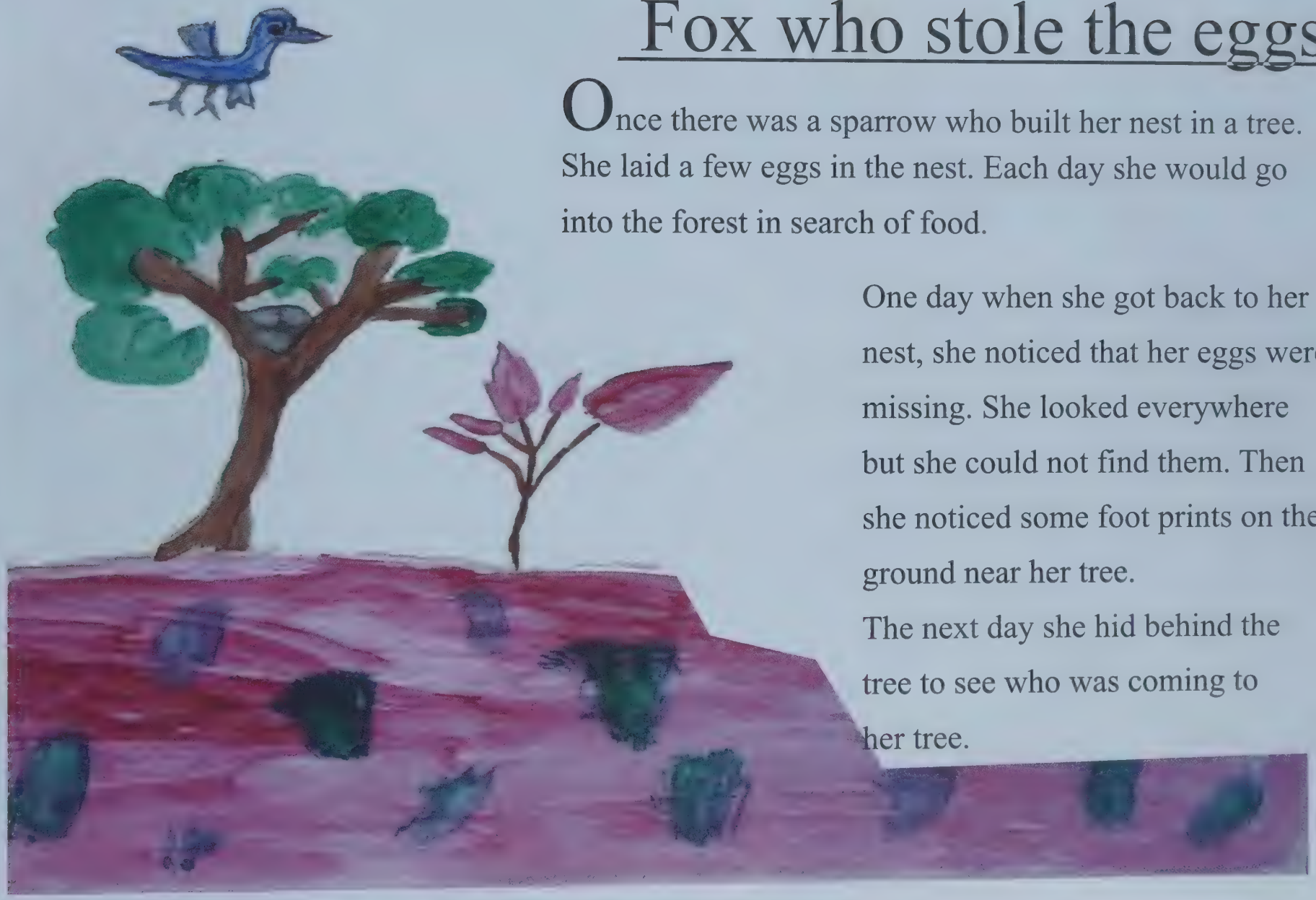


I wonder if my friend 'Man' who is very fond of me, will weep for me???

Saying this Onion also dies.

From then on, to this day, all of us men and women weep for the Onion when we cut onions.

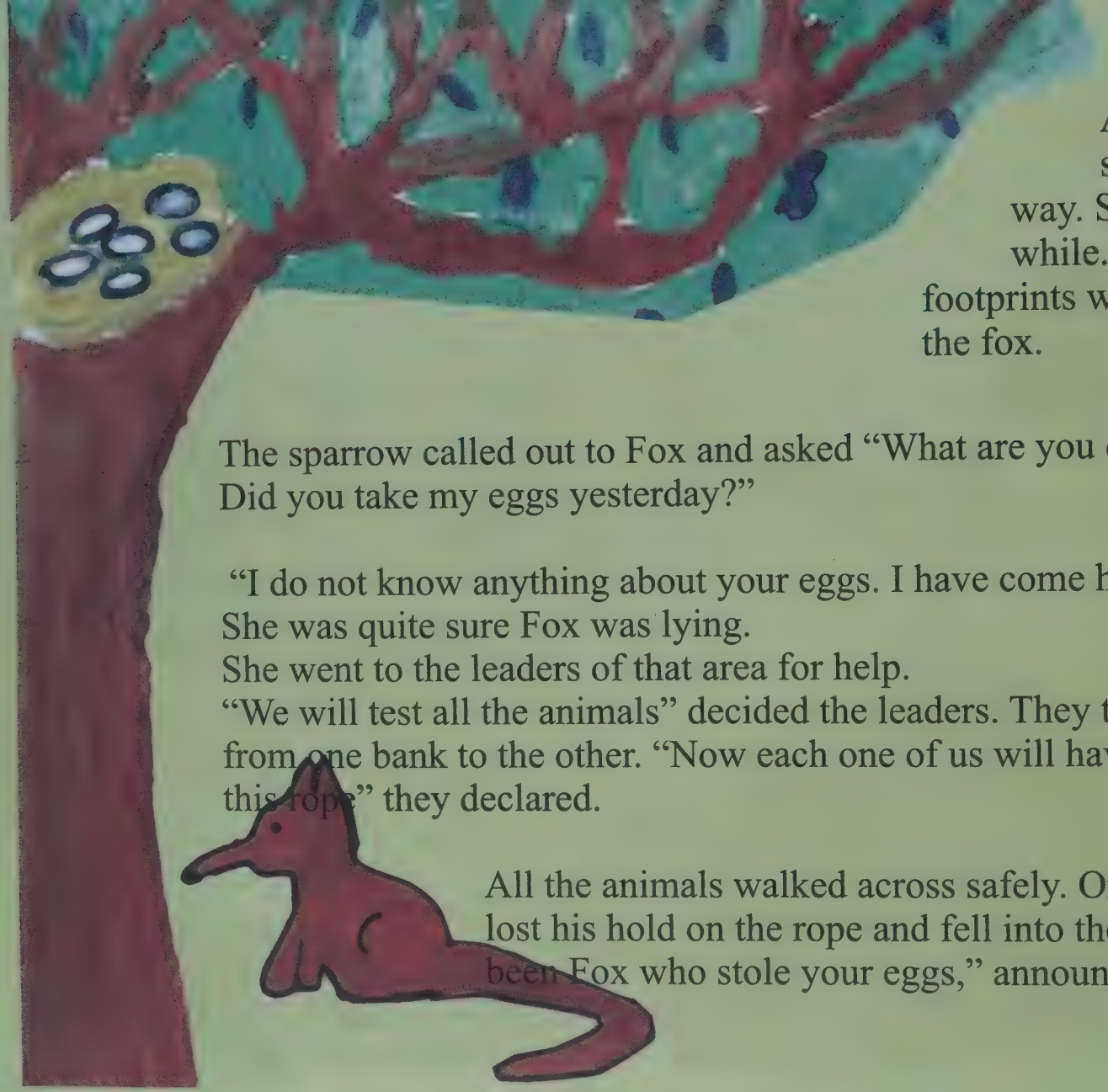
Fox who stole the eggs



Once there was a sparrow who built her nest in a tree. She laid a few eggs in the nest. Each day she would go into the forest in search of food.

One day when she got back to her nest, she noticed that her eggs were missing. She looked everywhere but she could not find them. Then she noticed some foot prints on the ground near her tree.

The next day she hid behind the tree to see who was coming to her tree.



A little later in the day she saw a fox coming that way. She watched him for a while. She saw that the footprints were the same as those of the fox.

The sparrow called out to Fox and asked "What are you doing here? Did you take my eggs yesterday?"

"I do not know anything about your eggs. I have come here to work" he replied. She was quite sure Fox was lying.
She went to the leaders of that area for help.
"We will test all the animals" decided the leaders. They tied a rope across the river, from one bank to the other. "Now each one of us will have to cross the river using this rope" they declared.

All the animals walked across safely. Only Fox could not. He lost his hold on the rope and fell into the river. "So it must have been Fox who stole your eggs," announced the leaders.

Kilina Penga

Many years ago there lived a family of five sisters. They lived deep in the forest, with their parents.

A few years later, their sixth sister was born. Mother was very worried that Father would kill the child. So, she carried the baby into the forest. There, on the banks of a stream , she kept the child in a safe place. Everyday she would come to feed the child.

Once Father wanted to know where she was going. "I have a bad stomach, so I have to go to the stream" replied Mother cleverly.

Years passed by and the baby was now a little girl. She would play by herself happily. She was safe because the bees in the big hive nearby looked after her.

Whenever she felt hungry she would lie down below the hive. Then honey from the hive would drip down into her mouth, one drop at a time.

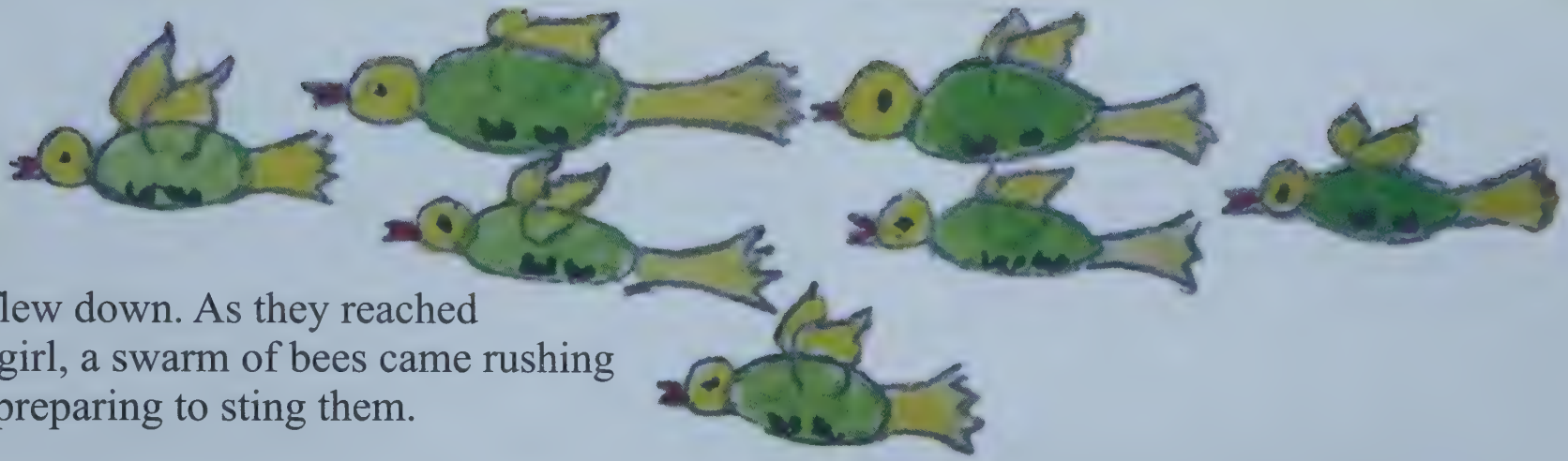
One day the little girl was singing and playing all by herself.

Thullum Thullum kodi
*Marme kodi magale**

As she sang this little rhyme a flock of seven parrots
Flew above her.
They were on their way to a festival nearby.
They looked down and saw a little girl playing all by herself

"Shall we take that beautiful little child with us?" asked the last Parrot.
Everyone agreed.

*Thullum Thullum kodi Marme kodi magale — jumping up and down by the side of the creeper called 'Marme'



So they flew down. As they reached the little girl, a swarm of bees came rushing at them, preparing to sting them.

"Why do you want to sting us?"asked the eldest parrot.
"She is our child," replied the bees.
The parrots thought about this for a while and asked, "If we give you all the things we are taking to the festival, can we take the little girl as our sister?" The bees agreed.

The parrots were very happy that they now had a little sister of their own. The seven parrots carried their new sister with them back home.
At home Dog and Cat were waiting for the parrots. They saw a new person with them.

"Who is this?" they asked.
"This is our sister 'Kilina Penga'*. You have to take good care of her," replied the youngest Parrot.
"Yes!"chorused Dog and Cat, looking at Kilina Penga with interest.
"Stay here, dear Kilina Penga, we will be back soon," said the parrots. They said goodbye and flew away to the festival.

The next day Dog left home early. He packed some food for himself and went out to work. Cat had woken up much earlier to prepare the meal.

After Dog had left, Cat ate up the rest of the food. Soon he was sleepy. So he climbed onto the roof and curled up to sleep.

When Kilina Penga woke up she looked around for both Cat and Dog. Cat was fast asleep and Dog was not to be seen anywhere.

*Kilina Penga - sister of the parrots

Then she looked up at Cat who was curled up on the roof.
"Wake up Brother Cat; I am looking for some food. I am very hungry," said Kilina Penga.
"Oh! What a bother!" muttered Cat to himself. "There is no food. We were not asked to feed you!" said Cat sleepily.
"But I'm hungry" repeated Kilina Penga.
"Oh, cook your own food!" said Cat and went straight back to sleep.

Kilina Penga tried to get the fire ready. Then she saw that there were no embers in the fire, only ash.
Poor Kilina Penga!
She looked up at Cat and wondered whether she should wake him up. There was no one else to help her.

Shivering with fear, she walked up nervously towards Cat and said "I need some embers to get the fire started."
Cat peeped through his slit eyes and pretended to be asleep.

"Oh Brother Cat, won't you please help me! I do need some help. I'm so hungry," she pleaded.
"How dare you wake me up again! We have no neighbours nearby. Bah!
If you want to start your fire you will have to go to Aalaathi's house!" screamed Cat.
"But who is Aalaathi* and where will I find her?" asked Kilina Penga.
She was in tears now and terrified of Cat.

"Okay, now don't start crying. I am sorry I was angry," said Cat softly.
"Look! Far away, across the river, on the hill beyond, there is a little hut. That is Aalaathi's house. Go there and ask her for some embers," said Cat pointing to the hill in the distance.

Kilina Penga wiped her tears saying, "Thank you, Thank you so much!"
She ran out of the house before Cat could pounce on her again. When she got there, she saw Aalaathi's daughter, Feeding her new born baby.

*Aalaathi - Witch

"I have no fire at home. Can I take some embers from you to light my fire?" she asked.

"In a while, in a while," replied Aalaathi's daughter. "I am feeding my baby. Can you clean the front yard, spread some cow dung* over it and wash my clothes for me please?"asked Aalaathi's daughter.

"Sure! Anything to help you!" replied Kilina Penga and started to work. As she worked Aalaathi's daughter prepared the meal. Soon the meal was ready.

"Come have some hot Kanji*," invited Aalaathi's daughter.

*Cow dung - This is used as a binder on mud floors in Indian villages

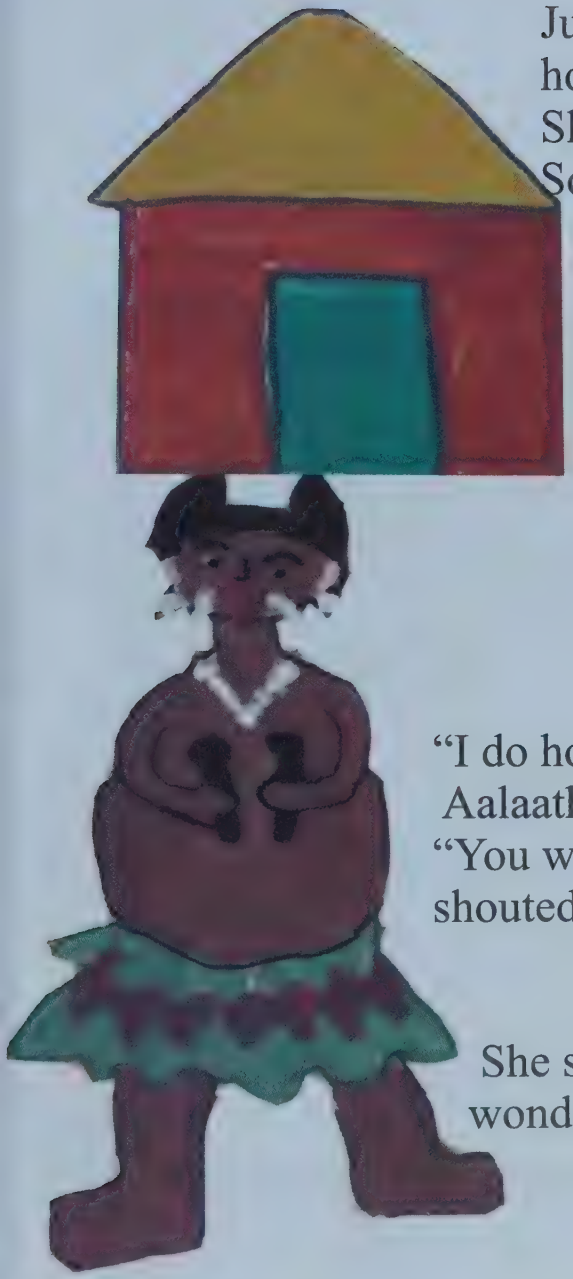
*Kanji - Rice porridge

By now Kilina Penga was ravenous. She went out and cut a Mukandi leaf* for herself. Then as she washed her hands and the leaf, she thought, “Ah! Such a lovely meal of delicious Kanji”.
Just as she was half way through the Kanji, “You had better finish that double quick,” warned Aalaathi's daughter.

“You see Mother will smell you out. She will gobble up all the flesh you have on this little body of yours, and throw away your bones.
She is an Aalaathi after all. So, do hurry up and leave. It's time for her to return,”explained Aalaathi's daughter.

Kilina Penga drank the rest of her Kanji in a hurry and ran across the fields, all the way home.
She had forgotten all about the fire.
When she got inside, she bolted the door firmly behind her and Collapsed in relief.

*Mukandi leaf- the end of a banana leaf, used for guests, to eat on



Just as Kilina Penga crossed the hill on which Aalaathi's house stood, Aalaathi returned.
She stuck her nose in the air and said."I smell human flesh and blood! Someone has been here!"

Aalaathi had been working very hard and now she was very hungry. "Who has been here?" roared Aalaathi.
"Kilina Penga was here, asking for some embers to light her fire. She has gone back home," said Aalaathi's daughter.

"I do hope Kilina Penga has reached home safely" prayed Aalaathi's daughter silently.
"You wicked girl! Why did you let her go! You know I love Man meat!" shouted Aalaathi as she stomped around the house in anger.

She smelt every nook and corner of her house saying, "Mmm!... I wonder whether you have hidden her away somewhere here"

"No, Mother, she isn't anywhere here. Far away beyond that hill and across the river is Kilina Penga's house,"said Aalaathi's daughter.

"I think she must have reached there by now!"she added.

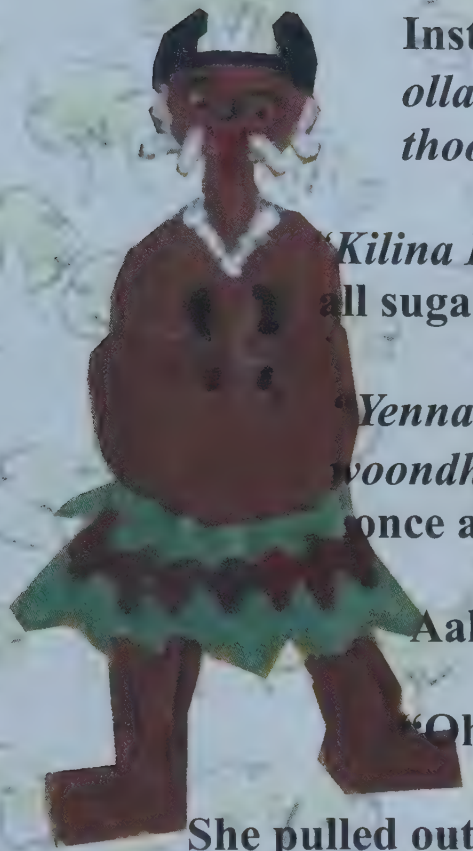
When Aalaathi heard this, she banged the door shut and left the house in a huff.

"I will find Kilina Penga," announced Aalaathi and hurried away to find her Delicious meal for the day.

Aalaathi came puffing up the hill to Kilina Penga's house. She saw that the door was closed. She was disappointed.

"Open the door my sweet little Kilina Penga, and let me see your lovely long hair, said Aalaathi, in a sweet voice.

The door did not open.



Instead a soft voice said,"*Yenna odukathi ayyena odukathi viralili olla modira; ayi kling yendu woondhaaku kappale buk yendu thooraakum,"**

"*Kilina Penga dear, let me see how beautiful you are,*" said Aalaathi all sugar and honey now.

"*Yenna odukathi ayyena odukathi viralili olla modira;ayi Kling yendu woondhaaku kappale buk yendu thooraakum,*" replied Kilina Penga once again from behind the door.

Aalaathi lost her patience.

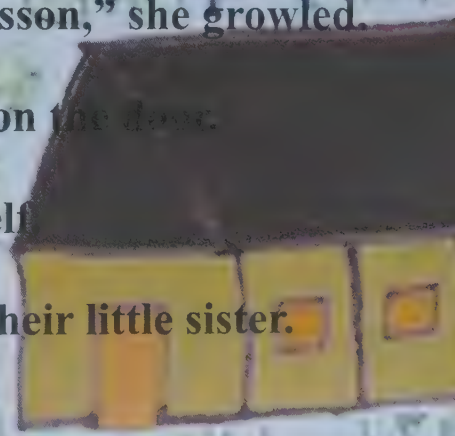
"Oh you horrible child I'll teach you a lesson," she growled.

She pulled out some magic powder and smeared it on the door.

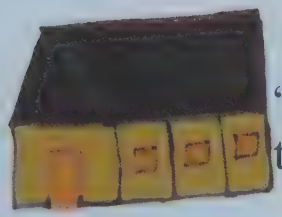
"I'll be back later," she said and walked away smiling to herself.

A few hours later the seven parrots came home with gifts for their little sister.

They noticed that the door was shut.



*Yenna odukathi ayyena odukathi viralili olla modira; ayi *kling* yendu woondhaaku kappale *buk* yendu thooraakum — When the ring from my youngest brother's little finger falls "KLING" then the door will open with a "BUK" sound



"Little sister! Little sister! Please open the door. We're back from the festival"said the first Brother Parrot.

Kilina Penga answered in a small voice, ***"Yenna odukathi ayyena odukathi viralili olla modira; ayi kling yendu woondhaaku kappale buk yendu thooraakum.***"

The door remained closed.

Each parrot knocked on the door and asked her to open it.
Each time they got the same reply.
Finally, it was the youngest Parrot's turn.
He too got the same reply.

BUT .....

As soon as Kilina Penga spoke, the ring from the youngest Parrot's finger fell to the ground

'KLING!'

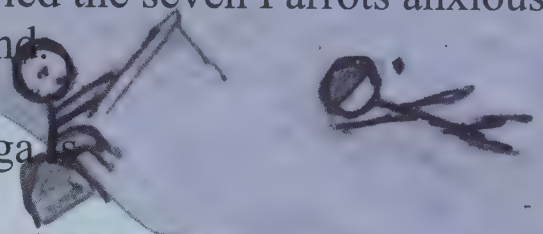
The door opened suddenly. **'BUK!'**

Kilina Penga had been standing just behind the door, waiting eagerly for her brothers. When the

door opened, the powder that Aalaathi had smeared fell on her face.

Poor Kilina Penga felt dizzy and fell unconscious to the floor.

"Oh Kilina Penga!
What has happened to you," cried the seven Parrots anxiously.They tried waking her up, but she neither moved nor made a sound.



"Oh! Oh! Our dear Kilina Penga is
no more! She will never play
or sing with us anymore" sobbed the parrots.

"Goodbye Kilina Penga. We will miss you!" they said.

They put her into a box along with all the lovely gifts they had bought for her from the festival.

Then they put the box gently into the river nearby.
The box floated downstream for quite some distance.

It floated downstream for a while and hit a huge rock on the water's edge. It was now caught below the rock.

The next day a Washerman came to wash some clothes. He sat by the rock and started his washing. The moment the cloth hit the rock he heard a voice sing,

"Vann anna vann anna thile mele
Seele kuthi, Bonda,
Tibi! Tibi!"*

At first he thought someone coming along that way was singing. He waited to see who was going to join him in his washing.
No one came. So, he carried on with his work. The singing resumed.

"Vann anna vann anna thile mele
Seele kuthi, Bonda,
Tibi! Tibi!"

He ignored the voice and continued to wash. Soon the singing grew louder and louder till he could bear it no more. He could see no one but he could hear the song clearly.

"I seem to be hearing things! Or is this a Ghost Rock?! Something is strange," he stammered nervously. He ran as fast as he could to call the Wiseman of his village. The whole village came to see the 'singing rock'.

The Wiseman asked the Washerman to wash the sari once again.

*Vann anna vann anna thile mele Seele kuthi, Bonda, Tibi! Tibi! — Brother Washerman, Brother Washerman, don't hit me on my head with a sari,Tibi Tibi

And lo! There was that voice again!

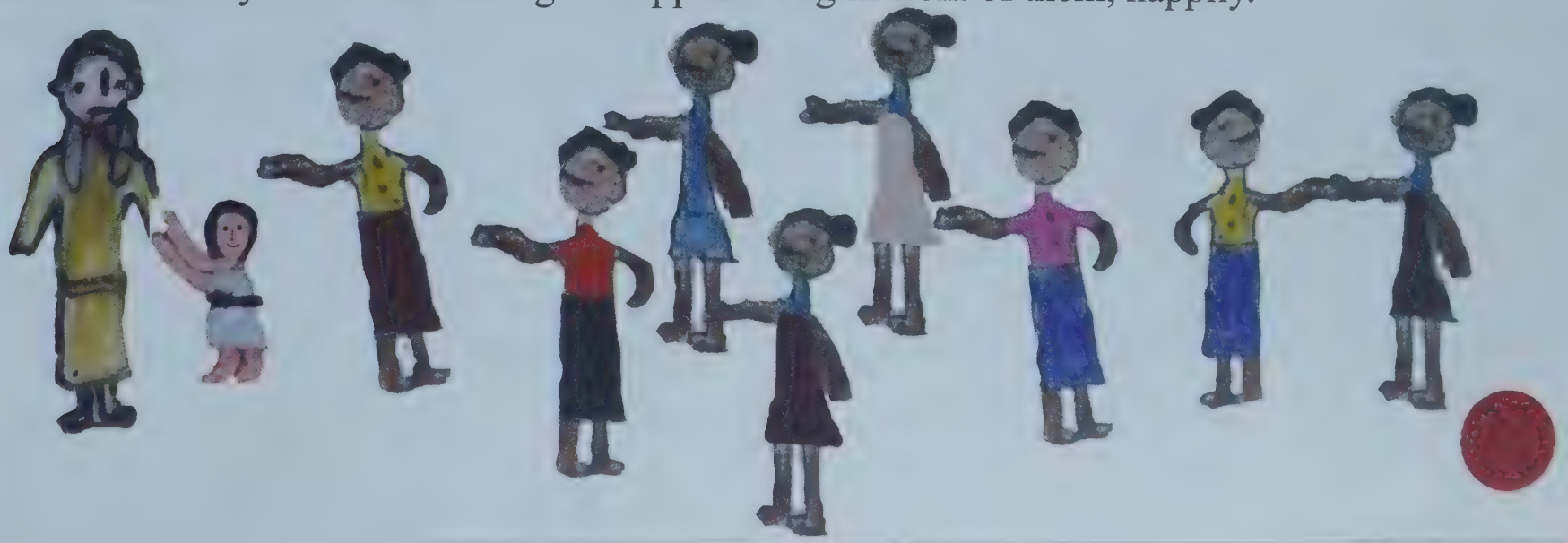
"Vann anna vann anna thile mele
Seele kuthi, Bonda,
Tibi! Tibi!"

"Break that rock," ordered the Wiseman. When the rock split open they found a box with a glass lid inside it.

"See there is a little girl inside the box!" exclaimed the Wiseman. "Open the box and pick her up,"he instructed. The Washerman did as he was told. The little girl ran to the Wiseman.

"Oh Thank you so much! Please take me with you. I have no one of my own,"she begged.

The Wiseman was only too happy to have a little girl in his family. The whole village sang and danced all the way back. The little girl skipped along in front of them, happily.



The Cunning Fox

Long ago, Uthamma* and Uthappa* lived with their Grandson on the edge of the forest. Everyday they would go into the forest and collect spinach, tubers and many different kinds of fruits for their daily food. They also cut some bamboo to make baskets. They sold these in the town. They bought coconuts, puffed rice and a few other things which they could not get from the forest.

*Uthamma - Grandmother in Paniya

*Uthappa - Grandfather in Paniya

One day after shopping, they were walking through the forest to get back home. On the way they came across a dead fox.

"Uthappe, Look! There's a dead fox here. Shall we take it home and cook it?" asked the little boy, eagerly.

Uthappa replied "There's only one fox for the three of us. That's not enough."

The fox had only been pretending to be dead. He jumped up, realizing that his trick had not worked. "Let me try fooling them once more" thought the fox.

So he ran through the trees till he went ahead of the family. He lay down once again, pretending to be dead.

Soon the little boy and the others reached him.

"Here's good luck Uthappe, one more dead fox. Shall we take them both now?!?"

Once again, Uthappa refused. He said two foxes were not enough for all three of them.

The fox jumped up after they had passed by. He thought that one more try would be worth it. So, off he ran and pretended to be dead again.

"Oh! Now we have three foxes Uthappe. Shall we take them all home?!"

"Yes," replied Uthappa.

The three of them put down all the things they had bought in the market. They ran back to get the first two foxes.

The fox listened to their footsteps as they ran away. Once he was sure they were out of sight, he hurriedly looked into all their bags. He quickly ate up all the tasty sweets and carried the rest away.

"Mmmmm!! That was definitely worth it" he said, as he gently patted his bulging stomach.

After a while Uthappa, Uthamma and their grandson returned. They were quite confused because they could not find the other two foxes.
When they returned to the spot they noticed that all their food was missing too.

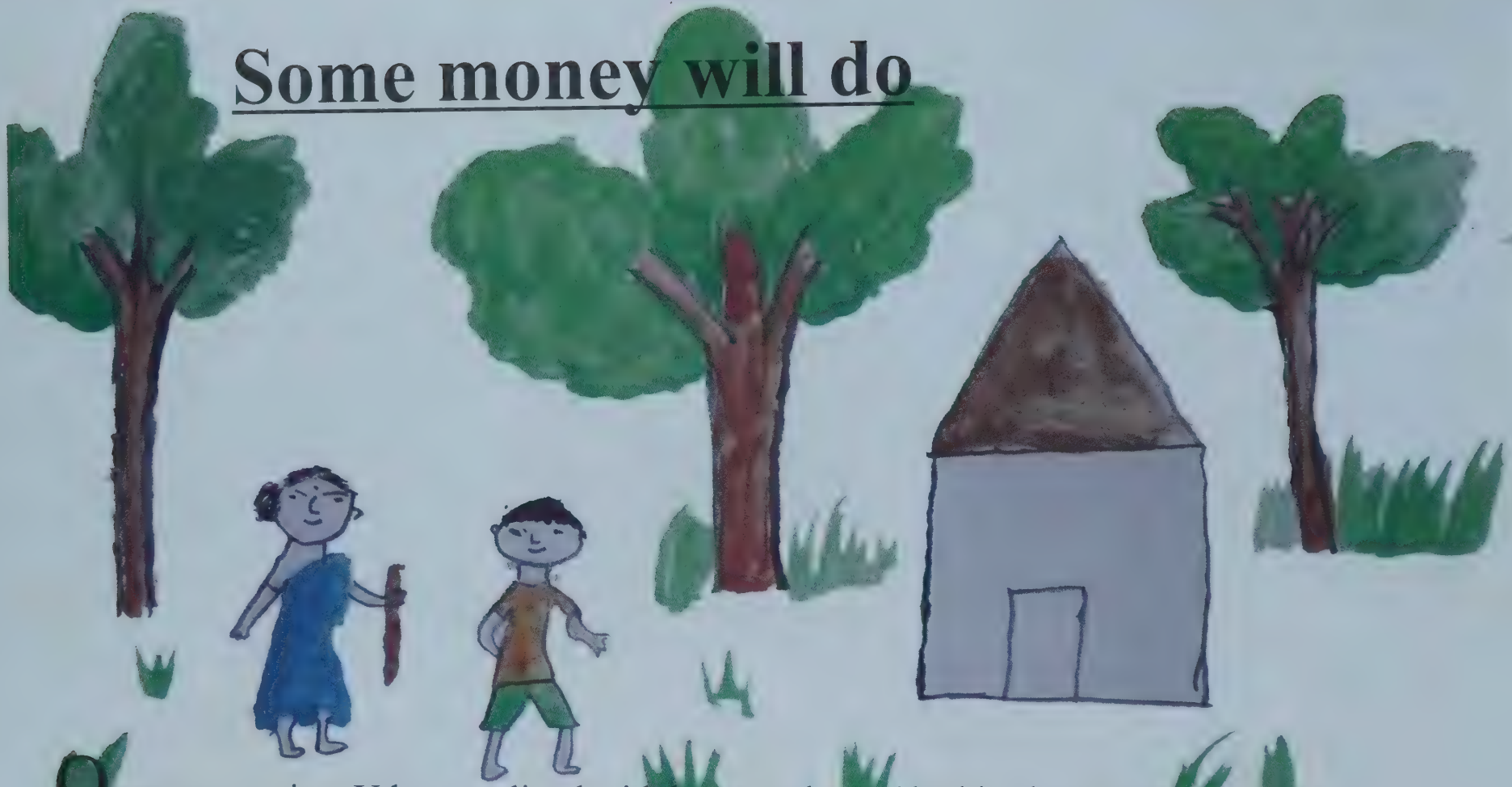
And Oh! Oh! Where was the third fox?

They knew then, that it was the same fox that had tricked them.

Uthappa said, "We were greedy. We didn't need three foxes.
We should have taken the first one. Now we've lost everything."

They returned home empty-handed and sad.

Some money will do



Once upon a time Uthamma lived with her grandson, Chathi. They were very poor. Although Uthamma was old she worked very hard. Chathi always helped her at home.

A few years later Uthamma could not earn money anymore.

One day she called Chathi and said, "We do not have any money at home. You will have to find some work."

Chathi replied "Yes Uthamme, I could sell some of your murukkus* and bring home some money."

The next day Uthamma, made some murukkus. She put them into a basket and gave it to him with her blessings.

He left home to sell them. On the way he saw three dogs. He sold them some murukkus. He asked them for the money. The dogs only wagged their tails in reply.

"Oh, do you mean to say that you will pay me tomorrow. ?" asked Chathi. The dogs wagged their tails once again.

That day he went home without any money.

*Murukkus - a fried crispy South Indian snack

The next day he brought another basketful of murukkus. On the way he met the same dogs. He sold them some more murrukkus and asked them to give him the money. The dogs wagged their tails once again.

He thought they were saying "We will pay you tomorrow."

He stood there watching the dogs eat the murukkus*. They seemed very happy.

After some time three men came that way. Each of them carried a box which they had stolen. They were looking for a place to hide the boxes.

The dogs knew that these men were thieves and began chasing them. Terrified of being bitten by the dogs the three men ran. They threw the boxes down and ran as fast as they could.

The boy picked up the boxes. He opened them one by one. To his surprise he found each box filled with lots and lots of money. He took a little money from one of the boxes for himself.

"Some money will do," he said to himself.

He threw the rest of the money with the boxes into the river nearby. Then he walked back home.

"Take this money Uthamme" said Chathi. He told her about the thieves, the boxes, and what he had done with them.

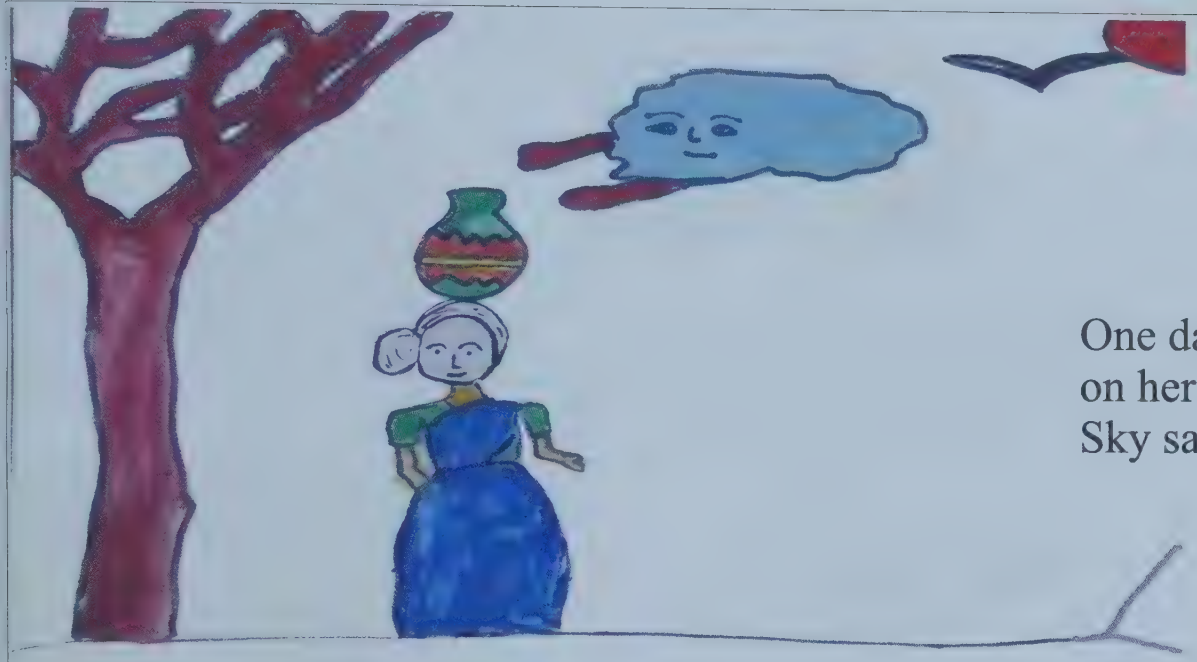
She was shocked.

She said,"That was the money the dogs had given us for the murrukkus. Why did you throw the rest away? I will go to the river and pull out the boxes. I will take the money we have earned," and rushed to the river.

The Old Woman and the Sky

Once upon a time, in a far off village, Uthamma lived all by herself. She sold curd* to everyone in the village.

*Curd - yoghurt

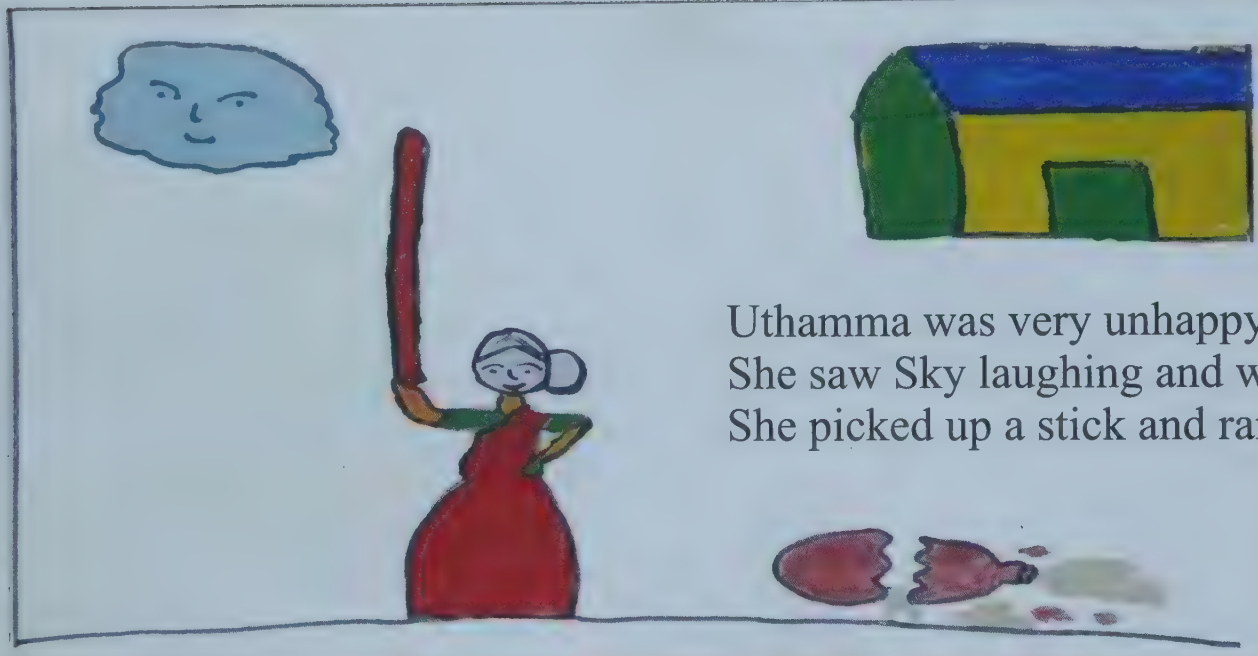


One day she set out with a pot of curd
on her head.
Sky saw her selling it.

He wanted to tease her.

He blew very hard.
Her pot fell down and broke to pieces.

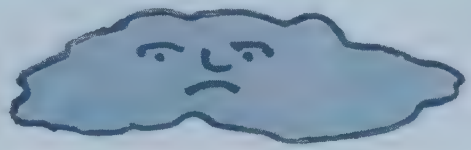
Sky laughed aloud.

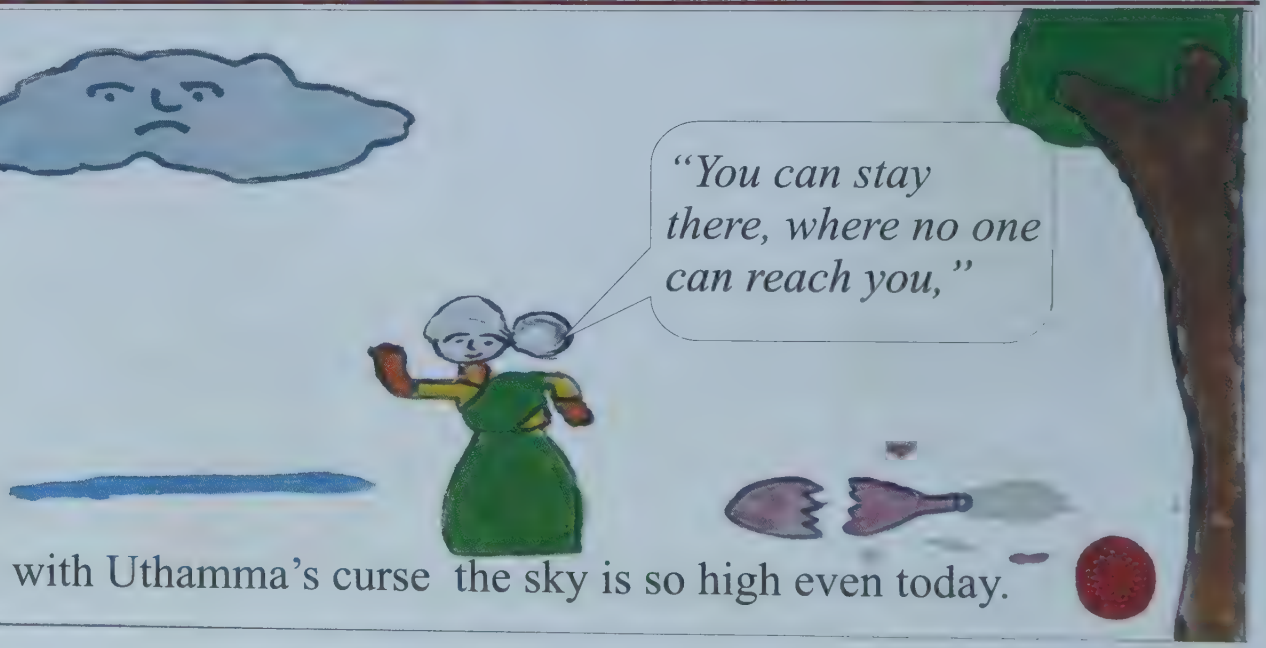


Uthamma was very unhappy. She had lost all her curd.
She saw Sky laughing and was very angry.
She picked up a stick and ran to beat Sky.

Sky was now careful.

He went up higher and higher to escape Uthamma's cane.

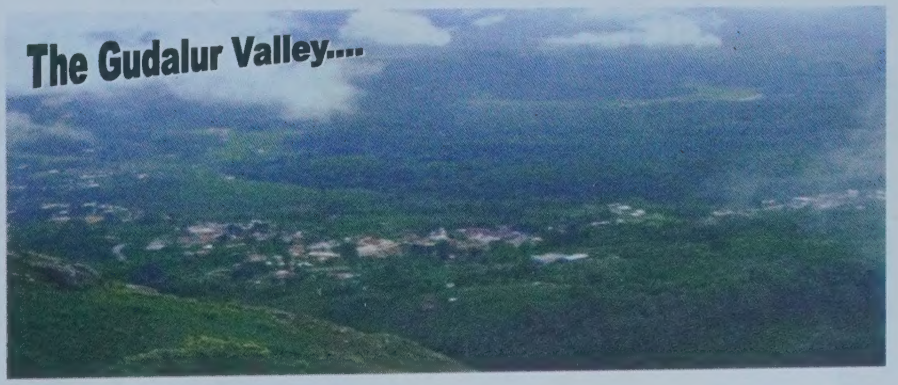




That is why, with Uthamma's curse the sky is so high even today.

ADIVASI MUNNETRA SANGAM (AMS)

The Adivasi Munnetra Sangam has emerged as an umbrella organisation of all the tribes in the Gudalur and Pandalur taluks of the Nilgiris. The five tribes of this area - Paniya, Kattunaicka, Bettakurumba, Mullukurumba and the Irula - came together as one Adivasi community and spearheaded their development. Village level sangams (organisations) were formed to take up issues of land alienation, land rights and to fight social injustice. On December 5th 1988 more than ten thousand Adivasis gathered together for a peaceful procession, as a show of strength. This was when the AMS was born.



The AMS continues to take up the cause of the Adivasis. It has questioned unjust practices of the tea and coffee plantation owners. It has demanded benefits that were due to them from the various government bodies. It has also challenged individuals who have over time exploited and oppressed them.

With a mass base of more than 14000 members in over 200 villages the AMS has built up credibility in the whole of the Nilgiris.

The symbol of the AMS depicts their musical and hunting instruments that every Adivasi recognizes as his or her own.

The AMS has now taken up the issue of Cultural revival in a systematic way.

First, the documenting and recording of their songs, stories, riddles, history, and their struggles was done. Later a script for each of their five languages was devised. and the Paniya script was used for a primer.

The publishing of the Tamil-Paniya edition of this book, Kilina Penga, and now the English version, is one more attempt towards this Cultural revival.